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Saints: different yet alike in doing the will of God

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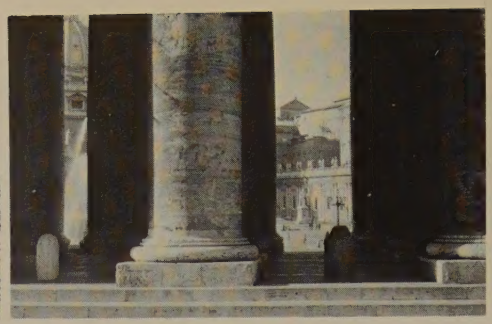

Matthew Silvan

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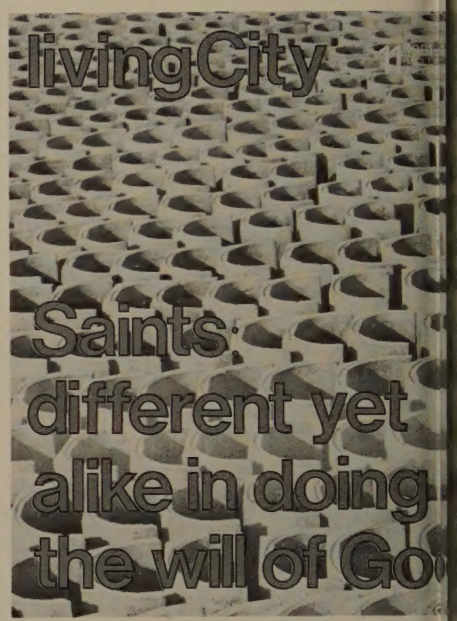

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COVER: THE CHURCH'S YES TO G "We observed that the saints were so d ent from one another that each seem masterpiece yet they were all alike in each had accomplished God's will."

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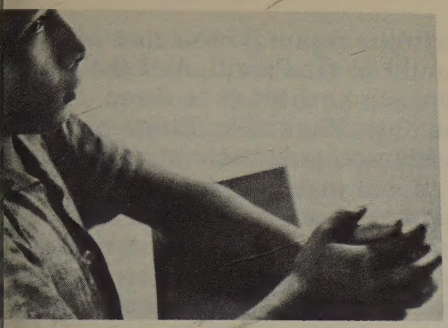

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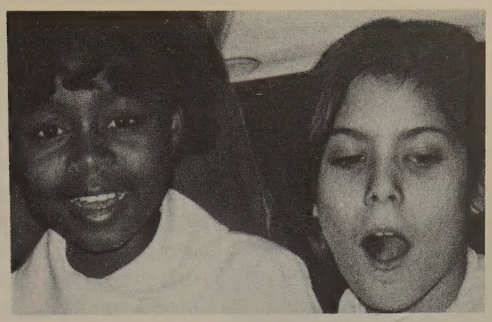

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The Church's YES to God

by CHIARA LUBICH

We are continuing here the publication of a series of talks given by Chiara Lubich on the will of God. In the following excerpt, she begins a comparison between the experience of the Focolare Movement and what we find in the writings of the Church Fathers, the popes and the Second Vatican Council.

PHOTO: Italian Cultural Institute

Scripture makes it clear that we should do God's will. And the saints also exhort us to do so. For example, Maximilian Kolbe writes to his mother in these words:

"I will wish you, Mother, neither health nor prosperity. Why? Because I want to wish you better than that, something so good that God Himself would not wish you better: that in all things, the will of this very good Father be accomplished in you, Mother, that you may know in all things how to fulfill the will of God! This is the very best I can wish for you. God Himself could not wish better than that."[1]

Let us now compare our own experience, point by point, with what we find in the Church Fathers, the saints, the popes and the Second Vatican Council.

The Lord made us understand that our will must coincide with his.

Francis de Sales says, "The soul that loves God is so transformed into the divine will that it merits, rather, to be called God's will than to be called obedient and subject to his will."[2] And a "precious grace" received by Catherine of Siena "was the conformity of her will with, and, as it were, the absorption of her will into, the will of God."[3] This transformation of Catherine's will was so perfect that she did not hesitate to write, even to the popes, "Thus you will do God's will and mine."[4]

It was clear to us from the very beginning of the Movement that by doing God's will we could reach sanctity. The saints, too, say that perfection lies precisely in this.

Catherine of Siena, for instance, is convinced that whoever takes this road will travel swiftly from one virtue to the next. And she writes:

"O tender,loving Jesus,may your will be accomplished in us always, as it is in heaven by your angels and saints. . . . Then the soul . . . will run like an unbridled horse, from grace to grace, at full speed, and from virtue to virtue. It will no longer have any restraints to hold it back from running because it will have cut away from its own will every disordinate appetite and desire, for these are reins and fetters that obstruct the race of spiritual persons."[5]

Teresa of Avila, whose way to reach God was prayer, is of the same opinion. She has no doubt that perfection lies in doing God's will, and that the more one does so, the more graces one receives.

"All that the beginner in prayer has to do — and you must not forget this, for it is very important — is to labor and be resolute . . . to bring his will into conformity with the will of God. . . . This comprises the very greatest perfection which can be attained. The more perfectly a person practices it, the more he will receive of the Lord and the greater the progress he will make on this road."[6]

This is how she corrects those who think that perfection is to be found in mystical phenomena:

"It will become quite clear that the highest perfection consists not in interior favors, or in great raptures, or in visions, or in the spirit of prophecy, but in the bringing of our wills into conformity with the will of God."[7]

And she gives a personal example:

"While I was wondering if the people were right who disapproved of my going out [to found monasteries] and if I should do better to occupy myself continually in prayer, I heard these words: 'For as long as life lasts there is no gain to be had in striving to [enjoy Me more], but only in doing My will.'"[8]

For Paul of the Cross, "The highest perfection consists in being perfectly united to the Most Holy Will of God."[9] And Paul VI tells us what holiness is in these words:

"This holiness to which we are called, is the result of two component factors, the first of which . . . is the grace of the Holy Spirit. . . . To be in the grace of God is everything for us. Our perfection is the possession of divine charity. [But] is there nothing else to be done? Yes, another factor is necessary . . . if we do not wish to fall into quietism or moral indifference. It is our "yes"; it is making ourselves available for the Spirit, and accepting — even more, desiring — the will of God. . . ."[10]

John XXIII affirms that "real greatness lies in doing the will of God, entirely and perfectly."[11]

As for us, from the very beginning we have always believed that if we do God's will and not our own, then our lives will be following the pattern of his divine plan.

Paul VI recalls the example of St. Joseph, who had such an extraordinary destiny because he was always faithful and constant in listening to the Almighty, and he comments:

"The splendid plans of God, the provident enterprises that the Lord has in mind for human destinies, can coexist with and rise above the most ordinary conditions of life. . .

"To conform our capricious, obstinate, often mistaken, sometimes even rebellious will to his; to make this small but sublime will coincide . . . with the will of God . . . *is the secret to living a great life.* It is to merge ourselves with the Lord's thoughts and to enter the plans of his omniscience and mercy as well as of his immense generosity."[12]

> "FROM THE VERY BEGINNING WE HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT IF WE DO GOD'S WILL AND NOT OUR OWN, THEN OUR LIVES WILL BE FOLLOWING THE PATTERN OF HIS DIVINE PLAN."

We have already seen that in the early days of the Movement, the words "God's will be done" were definitely not an expression of mere resignation for us. To do God's will was our greatest joy, our greatest glory!

In his book, *The Way*, Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, founder of "Opus Dei" writes: "Resignation? . . . Conformity? *Love* the Will of God!"[13] And he sees four steps in the development of a Christian's spiritual life, which are, appropriately, "to be resigned to the Will of God; to conform to the Will of God; to want the will of God; to love the Will of God."[14]

Likewise, for Paul of the Cross:

"It is great perfection to resign oneself in all things to the divine will; it is greater perfection to live with great indifference, abandoned to God's good pleasure; the greatest, highest perfection is to nourish oneself, in a pure spirit of faith and love, on the divine will."[15]

As I described in a previous issue, we wanted to know God's will and, from the start, we did our best to discover it. When we had doubts about what to do in the present moment, we would decide on a certain course of action, asking God at the same time to put us back on the right track if we had made the wrong choice.

John of the Cross has something beautiful to say in this regard. He suggests that spiritual persons can obtain light and guidance from two sources: "natural reason and the law and doctrine of the Gospel."[16]

Elizabeth of the Trinity reminds us that God's will is also contained in the Rule the Church has given us: "From morning to night, the Rule is there to express God's will for us moment by moment. If you only knew how I love this Rule which is the form in which he wants me to reach sanctity."[17]

From the very first days of this new life, the Holy Spirit made us see clearly that Jesus was the one who had perfectly accomplished God's will.

This is confirmed by Paul VI:

"If the break in the life-giving relationship between God and mankind resulted from an act of rebellion on the part of man, eager for an independence that was to be fatal to him, with the cry: "I will not serve" (Jer. 2:20), reparation could only come through a contrary attitude, the one assumed by Jesus, the Savior, to whom, in the Letter to the Hebrews (10: 5-7), the following words are attributed: "Coming into the world he said: ' . . . Lo, I have come to do your will, O God. . .' " (cf. Ps. 40:7-9).[18]

One cannot understand and reconstruct something of the figure of Christ without regarding the essential importance which fulfillment of the Father's will assumes in Him. . . ."[19]

If all that Jesus did was done in order to obey the Father, he is our model. Moreover, he acted in such a way that we can imitate his example. Augustine points this out:

" 'Father,' he said, 'if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' This was the human will which wanted something of its own. . . . But . . . he added, 'nevertheless, not as I will, Father, but as you will' (Mt. 26:39). . . . Therefore, that you might want something different from what God wants is permitted because of human frailty . . . it would be most unusual if you did not want some particular thing. But immediately reflect on the One who is above you. He is above you, you are below him; he is the Creator, you are the creature; he is the Lord, you are the servant. . . . That is why he corrects you, why he causes you to submit to the Father's will, saying on your behalf: 'Nevertheless, not as I will, Father, but as you will.' "[20]

John of the Cross reflects upon our desire to know God's will and then, "comparing the age of the written Law of the Old Testament with the age of the law of the Gospel and of grace, he warns us against desiring to be advised of God's will through extraordinary revelations and oracles accompanied by visions and voices. Even though such ways of knowing God's will were legitimate under the Old Covenant, they are no longer legitimate now."[21] The reason he gives for this conclusion is simply splendid!

"Now that the faith is established through Christ, and the Gospel law made manifest . . . there is no reason for inquiring of Him in this way, or expecting Him to answer as before. In giving us His Son . . . He spoke everything to us at once. . . ."[22]

Jesus, therefore, *is* the Father's entire message to us. In him, in his life, and in his teachings, we find what we must do. Writing in the third century, Cyprian put it this way:

"God's will is what Christ both did and taught: humility in behavior, firmness in faith, modesty in words, justice in deeds, mercy in works, uprightness in morals. It is to not even know what it means to do injury to another; it is to bear insults patiently, to maintain peace with the brethren, to love God with all one's heart, to love him as Father and to fear him as God. It is to put aside everything for Christ because he put aside everything for us, to remain inseparably united to his love, to stay close to his cross . . . and, when the time comes to fight for his name . . . to be steadfast and open in giving witness to him, confident in the midst of torture, and patient in accepting the death for which we will receive the crown. This . . . is what it means to accomplish the Father's will."[23]

We observed that the saints were so different from one another that each seemed a masterpiece, a unique creation of God's imagination. Yet they were all alike in that each had accomplished God's will. We have countless examples to choose from, but let us take Therese of Lisieux. Doing God's will was the dominant theme in her life:

"I desire only His will."[24]

"My God, 'I choose all!' I don't want to be a saint by halves, I'm not afraid to suffer for You, I fear only one thing: to keep my own will; so take it, for 'I choose all' that you will!"[25]

A few months before her death she declared:

"My heart is filled with God's will, and when someone pours something on it, this doesn't penetrate its interior; it's a nothing which glides off easily, just like oil which can't mix with water."[26]

One of those present during her last agony tells us that the prioress, Mother Marie de Gonzague, asked her: " 'And if it were God's will to leave you on the cross for a long time, would you accept it?' With extraordinary heroism she said: 'I would.' "[27]

Because she had lived this way, at the end of her life she was able to make the extraordinary statement: "In heaven the good God will do all I wish, because I have never done my own will upon earth."[28]

(TO BE CONTINUED IN NEXT ISSUE)

(Excerpt taken from "Our Yes to God" by Chiara Lubich, New York: New City Press, 1981, pp. 53-63.)

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FEATURE ARTICLE

LUTHERANS AND CATHOLICS UNITED IN THEIR YES TO GOD

Compiled by ORESTE PALIOTTI AND KARL-HEINZ FLECKENSTEIN

In the framework of the long and fruitful ecumenical dialogue which the Focolare Movement has started in Germany, establishing deep bonds of friendship and communion with Lutheran Christians, a gathering was organized by the Movement's **Centro Uno** *once more this year during the week after Pentecost. These meetings, which have been held periodically and with evergrowing interest since 1962, are an expression of the "spiritual ecumenism" among Christians of different traditions based on personal relationships, mutual understanding, and the sharing of experiences in living the unitarian spirituality of the Movement. They prove to be a valid contribution toward building, from the foundation, the most favorable conditions for bringing the Churches closer together on the theological and hierarchical levels as well — as confirmed by bishops and priests of both Churches.*

The Movement thus wishes to contribute to the ecumenical work which Augustin Cardinal Bea had pioneered and which, from the time of Vatican II, has been promoted, within the Catholic Church, by the Secretariat for Christian Unity. An important milestone, even on the theological level, was reached this year during Pope John Paul II's visit to Germany, when he proposed the formation of a mixed commission of members of the German Lutheran and the Catholic Churches to study together, in a common search for unity, all the questions now under discussion on faith and on the Church. This commission was thus formed immediately.

The gathering at Rocca di Papa was held right on the wave of this new hope and confidence which the Pope's visit had produced among both Lutherans and Catholics.

Largely represented at the meeting were the inhabitants of the small ecumenical city of Ottmaring, a community now numbering about 130 members partly from the Focolare Movement and partly from the **Bruderschaft vom Gemeinsamenleben** *and the* **Kreuzbruderschaft.**

(continued on page 8)

CHIARA LUBICH'S MESSAGE
TO THE LUTHERAN-CATHOLIC ECUMENICAL
GATHERING
WHICH TOOK PLACE THIS PAST SPRING
AT ROCCA DI PAPA

GOD WANTS UNITY

Yesterday we celebrated the feast of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit. As we all know, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the majority of Churches and ecclesial communities are turning again to Christ as their model, in order to accomplish among all that unity which Jesus intended for his Church when he prayed: "That all may be one."

Today we are here together, Lutherans and Catholics, for a gathering that has become by now traditional. The central theme upon which everything will be based is: "The Will of God." This topic will be dealt with by both Lutherans and Catholics.

We will look more closely at the concept of the Will of God as it is revealed to us in the Old and the New Testaments; and there will also be a presentation of the experience of the Focolare Movement regarding this subject.

What is my wish for this gathering? That besides speaking about the Will of God, we also live it perfectly.

And it is the Will of God that unity be accomplished among us – the depth of unity that is possible when each one of us is open to the Holy Spirit.

If we are united, Jesus will be in our midst. And if he is among us, this gathering will not end here, limited in time and space, but rather, will be a step closer to the goal towards which the Holy Spirit is urging all of us: complete and perfect unity among all Christians.

This convention is being held in a center of the Focolare, and the spirituality of the Movement forms the basis for the meetings.

As you may know, it has been recognized by the Catholic Church – and other Churches as well – that the charism of unity is the gift God has given to this Movement.

In fact, the "magna carta" of our Movement is Jesus' Priestly Prayer, which he said shortly before dying. And we know that the source of all unity is the Blessed Trinity. However, we too are called to participate in this life – in the gift of unity – through faith and baptism, which makes us members of Christ. Through him, we enter into the life of the Trinity.

Because of this, when a person becomes a Christian, he or she becomes one with Christ, and at the same time is incorporated into his Mystical Body.

Unity, therefore, already exists.

And yet, the unity that Jesus wants requires something else: our collaboration.

If we are already one in Christ, we have to live in a way that reflects this reality. This unity has to become visible, active. Our lives should be such that Christ, who is within us, may emerge; and that Christ, who is among us, may manifest himself to the world.

In fact, if unity already exists within and among Christians, why is it that the world still does not recognize Christ?

The answer is simple: it is not enough to be baptized in order to reach the unity that Christ wants for us. It is necessary for the members to live up to their calling: all united to the Head, and in harmony with one another. Our right hand does not ignore the left. On the contrary, one hand washes the other.

What is needed is mutual love among Christians. Without this mutual love, it is not possible to bear witness to Christ in the world.

Let us take an example.

The current is always present in electrical wires; but if the plug is not in the socket – that is, if contact is not made – the light does not come on. In the same way, without mutual love – without "contact" – the gift of our being children of God, and brothers and sisters of one another cannot be manifested to the world.

The Movement has the task of reminding Christians that they must love one another, putting intc practice the New Commandment of Jesus, so that the Church may be, and be as Jesus wants it.

There is something else to be kept in mind here: we are from two Churches that differ in history, tradition, doctrine and constitution. And we know that complete unity is not possible if we do not have the same faith.

But the Holy Spirit is at work (through the respective hierarchies and the mixed theological commissions in both Churches) in order to reach unity in faith. In fact, notable progress has already been made in the Catholic-Lutheran dialogue.

Is there something we can do in order for this goal to be reached sooner? Certainly there is. In fact, we can do something that is indispensable.

We are all convinced that, in general, theological answers are not enough to solve the problems involved in accomplishing unity. How often the efforts of bishops and theologians were vain in the past because they did not have the support of the faithful.

The centuries of division have created a sense of death among the Churches. A few decades ago it often happened that Christians of one Church lived as if the others did not exist: therefore, for them, the others were dead.

Now it is no longer like that: usually, Christianity is recognized as one reality. What is the difference from before? Christians are no longer, so to say, dead to one another. Now Christianity could be seen as being sick: it is aware and feels the wounds of division. It suffers, but it wants to get well, and the Holy Spirit (who "heals that which bleeds") is helping it along.

Through our effort to recognize, accept and love one another, we can facilitate the work of the Holy Spirit. We can give an essential contribution to healing the one Church of Christ. On the basis of a Christianity that wants to be one, the Holy Spirit will then certainly give more light. Theological solutions will be found with greater ease and the time when unity will be visible will come closer.

Let us do our part therefore also today, and during this gathering so that the world may soon see that unity.

We can begin by loving one another here as Christ has loved us.

We can begin today, now, resolving to spend the rest of our lives working in this direction.

(continued from page 5)

In the last few years, Ottmaring has become a point of reference for many who work for building a dialogue and who hope to achieve unity. The flow of visitors to Ottmaring is constant; they come to experience the climate of mutual charity, concretely put into practice, and then return to their homes with a new determination to bring it to their own cities.

Among the participants there were about 100 members of the Lutheran Church, including Reverend Dieter Fürst, and about sixty Catholics. About forty of those present are teachers in the Association of Lutheran education. They took advantage of this occasion to get to know the Italian school system through the acquaintance and sharing of experiences with Italian teachers belonging to the Focolare Movement.

Following the introductory talk, given by Natalia Dalla Piccola, one of the first focolarine,[1] on the main points of the spirituality of unity, Chiara Lubich sent a powerful message which focused on the central theme of the gathering: "The Will of God." This topic, so interesting and applicable to the lives of all Christians, was further expounded in another talk which Chiara gave subsequently.

Monsignor Aloys Klein, of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, also spoke, illustrating the ecumenical work carried out thus far by the two Churches on the theological level. There was also a talk by Reverend Dieter Fürst of the Lutheran Church, who spoke about the will of God from the point of view of their Church.

While at Rome, the participants visited the Benedictines of St. Anselm, being welcomed by the Prior, Professor Gerard Bekes, who is an ecumenist. After visiting the sites of early Christian Rome, they celebrated the Lutheran Holy Supper in the Catacombs of Domitilla.

On the first day, the various groups had a chance to get acquainted and begin a dialogue based on mutual love. During their visit to the Focolare Priests' School of Formation at Frascati, they learned about the work of the Parish Movement.

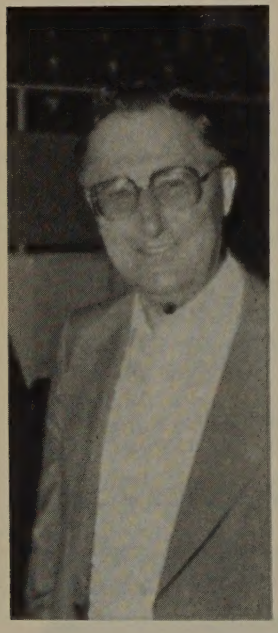
One day some of the leaders of the New Family Movement living at Rocca di Papa, related how they try to live the spirituality of the Movement as married couples, finishing with a presentation of the international congress, "The Family and Love," which had taken place on May 3 at Rome's Sports Palace. At another point in the program, some young people from the two World Gen Centers shared their experiences on how they try to live the will of God in their daily lives, at school and at home. Every day the participants met in small groups, thus giving time for reflection and study.

As is often the case on occasions like these, it is almost impossible to transmit with words the climate of ecumenical fraternity which characterized this gathering. Meetings such as this one become experiences through which the unity among Christians grows. The love that is born from living the Gospel and circulates among all, and the presence of Christ in the midst of those who are united in his name are the cause of this growth.

One of the Lutherans present said: "First of all we must ask ourselves whether we want to be Christians or not. This is the question I and my parishioners have asked ourselves. During these days we have found many answers which we can apply to our daily lives, profound answers. This week has been an experience of living the Gospel in a committed way, for each one of us personally, and we are leaving with the decision to live it at home. We all agree on this point, and it is on the basis of this decision that we want to reorganize the work we are doing in our parish community."

Within this feature article, we are publishing the message of Chiara Lubich (page 6), a synthesis of the report delivered by Msgr. Aloys Klein of the Secretariat for Christian Unity (page 9), and an interview with the Lutheran deacon, Gunther Rattley, who lives with his community in the small city of Ottmaring (page 16).

Reverend Dieter Fürst of the Lutheran Church. Rev. Fürst spoke on how the will of God is understood in the Lutheran Church.



1) Focolarine: see inside back cover.

Monsignor Aloys Klein

Monsignor Aloys Klein of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, is entrusted with the dialogue with the Lutheran World Federation and with the Reformed Church. Transcribed here below are some segments of the report he presented during the gathering at Rocca di Papa.

Recent historical studies, through a retrospective analysis of Christianity in the twentieth century, have given major importance to the ecumenical movement, marking it as the most noteworthy development within each Church and in the relationships among Churches. If we look at the Roman Catholic Church from this perspective, it is evident how important is the almost revolutionary change that has taken place in her dogmatic attitude and ecclesial politics toward the other Christian Churches and toward the entire question of Christian ecumenicity. Even though we are still in the midst of events in the process of evolving, and still lack the necessary distance for being able to pronounce an objective historical-ecclesial judgment, we must nevertheless recognize that the Spirit of God has been guiding our Church through an extremely prudent, carefully pondered and controlled openness. He has guided her from an initial period of rejection of the ecumenical movement to the disposition and readiness to participate in it, as officially declared by Vatican II.

In the meantime, revered personalities, the Popes, have emphasized, in the fulfillment of their ministry as followers of St. Peter, the ecumenical dimension of the Church as an essential, indispensable part of her life, as a divine obligation. This is what Pope John Paul II said at Munich airport at the conclusion of his visit to Germany: "I want to serve unity. I want to walk all the ways in which, after the experiences of centuries and millennia, Christ is leading us towards the unity of that flock where he alone is the *only and reliable Good Shepherd.*"[1] We must be filled with joy and gratitude since God's providence has made us worthy of being no longer just neutral and distant observers, but active contemporary witnesses, true carriers of the ecumenical spirit. At the same time we must be aware of the fact that the graces so tangibly promised to our era must bear fruit, through us, members of the Church of Christ. The great possibility offered to us by God thus becomes an imperative of the present times.

In order to demonstrate how, from the time of Vatican II, the Catholic Church has been participating in the worldwide efforts toward the unification of Christianity, we must present a synthesis of the official, international dialogue with Lutheranism in the manifold ecumenical relationships and initiatives. In spite of the fact that we are now referring mainly to the theological dialogue, it is understood that many other avenues in the way of continuous contact, of cooperation, and of joint witness, have been opened up throughout the years. The essence of ecumenism does, in fact, encompass the whole life of Christians and of the Churches, and therefore entails much more than the mere treatment of the doctrinal questions which separate us.

After the establishment, in 1967, of a Commission for Joint Studies by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church, both sides gave clear proof of their serious determination to overcome the barriers that still remained.

In 1971, after five conferences, the Commission presented the results of its work under the title: "The Gospel and the Church" — the so-called Malta Report. Traditionally controversial theological questions of faith were examined in the light of our present-day knowledge on the theme (for instance, Scripture and Tradition, the doctrine of justification, the Apostolic Succession, ecclesiastical ministry, etc.). Due to the many positive reactions and recommendations of the participant Churches, both sides recognized the need to proceed further with the official dialogue. Thus, already in 1975, a new joint commission with seven members from each Church, was ready to start working. Its program was aimed at concentrating on the themes which had not been sufficiently explored in the Malta Report — first of all, the Eucharist and ecclesiastical ministry, with particular reference to the episcopacy. The Eucharist is undoubtedly the center of ecclesial life, and the point where the separation of Christians is felt most painfully. According to the Catholic faith, the problem of Communion in the Eucharist, so ardently desired, is indissolubly linked to the question of Eucharistic ministry; that is, to the person who presides over the Eucharistic celebration.

Msgr. Aloys Klein of the Secretariat for Christian Unity gave a detailed report on the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation. He answered many questions for the participants regarding particular aspects of this dialogue.

In 1978, the Joint Commission published a document on "The Eucharist." In the first part, dealing with important aspects of the Eucharist and understanding the significance of the supper, there are some points of agreement, and it therefore speaks of a "joint witness." The second part, on the other hand, deals with the still unsolved questions, which are presented through reciprocally expressed desires and requests for reform. Because of its language, its vision and practical guidelines, the reading and the study of this document is warmly recommended for any community.

The results of the joint studies on the Church's spiritual ministry are also expected to be published shortly, possibly within a few weeks. Although here too some partly unresolved problems still remain, the document holds the promise of noteworthy strides that our Churches can take toward an ever closer unity. The emphasis, on both sides, is that along with the common priesthood which is shared by all baptized Christians, there exists a special ministry instituted by Jesus Christ. This serves as a starting point for considering the concrete, individual questions, such as understanding the Apostolic Succession, the essence of ordination, the episcopal ministry, etc. In this document, the various explanations and elucidations finish with a vivacious presentation of the problems involved in the mutual acceptance of the two Churches' ministries.

A declaration entitled, "All Under One Christ," illustrates the extent to which the common foundation of faith uniting Catholics and Lutherans is today accepted, deeply rooted and widely spread. It was issued by the Joint Commission in 1980 on the occasion of the 450th anniversary of the "Confession of Augsburg." Pope John Paul II confirmed this communion of the central truths of faith at the general audience on June 25, 1980, reaffirming the same conviction in many subsequent speeches during that year, the last occasion being during his trip to Germany.

The Joint Commission felt called upon to present a joint statement regarding both the goals and the concrete steps to be taken toward the ever-growing unity, in order to have clarity and direction in the dialogue that is underway and in all the many relationships between the Churches. In its document, "Ways Toward Community," the Commission endeavored to draw a complete picture of unity. We must admit, however, that intense studies based on concrete models for Catholic-Lutheran unity are necessary to complete this picture. Let us hope that by 1982 the work may reach a conclusion. In the meantime, however, it would be well for all the faithful and all the communities of our Churches to devote themselves to a thorough study of the document, "Ways Toward Community," which is extremely useful from a spiritual point of view, and most stimulating from a pastoral one.

Looking back on the path covered during the last fifteen years — a short, yet extraordinary promising period — I would like to express what I feel through an image: I see Catholics and Lutherans working together digging a highway through a solid, forbidding rock. Each of us begins to penetrate the mountain from opposite sides. We know we should meet somewhere in the depths of the mountain, but just where, in what precise spot, it is impossible to tell as yet. It depends first of all on how intensely both sides work — on the tenacity and the power of our faith. Yet, even now, we have come close enough to hear each other's voices and the strokes of the axes. Even though the solid mass which we must pierce is as hard as crystal and does slow down our progress, we know that at the next breakthrough, on one side or the other, our brothers and sisters will be there, awaiting us with a joyful embrace of welcome. And in the end, isn't this mountain we are approaching, Jesus Christ himself?

1)English Translation from L'Osservatore Romano, English Edition, December 22, 1980, p.11.

Günther Rattey

We have addressed a few questions to Mr. Gunther Rattey, a Deacon for the Lutheran Church, who participated in the convention at Rocca di Papa.

Mr. Rattey, you have been living at the Ecumenical Center in Ottmaring for ten years. Could you tell us what this experience has meant for you? And also something of your contacts with the Catholic Church.

"First of all I must admit that I used to have very strong reservations in regard to the Catholic Church, partly because I felt that its structure was entirely wrong. This attitude was based of course on information I had received on the historical development of the two Churches. When, after coming to Ottmaring and meeting the focolarini,[1] I saw that here there were Catholic Christians who lived the Gospel, and I was greatly astonished. Later on I took part in various meetings like this one, and also visited Rome, where I had a chance to meet many personalities of the Catholic Church — bishops, Pope John XXIII, Pope Paul VI, and the present pope.

"On those occasions I had the opportunity to take a closer look at the Catholic Church and I realized that many of my previous ideas had been prejudiced, that some of my attitudes of a dogmatick nature did not really correspond to reality. I discovered that in the Catholic Church, Christ possessed certain attributes which I had not known previously. It was a new, a personal experience of God. My very way of under-

standing God and the Church underwent a fundamental change — it became more complete. My encounter with Catholic Christians gave me, above all, an awareness of what it means to be working together, forgiving one another, understanding one another in our everyday life."

During this week we have visited, among other places, the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. Entering a church dedicated to Mary is not really something Lutheran Christians usually do. How did you feel about that visit?

"I spent a long time before the painting of Christ placing the crown on Mary's head, which is in the apse of the basilica. Earlier, while contemplating Michelangelo's *Pieta'* in St. Peter's, I had begun to comprehend the figure of Mary as a human being who had lived here on earth, but the reality of Mary's place in heaven was still somewhat distant and hard for me to understand. Then I realized that Mary is a model for Christian life, an example, in all its fullness, of the 'royal priesthood' to which all Christians are called. The realization that Mary's coronation in heaven represents this aspect of her life as well, filled me with a special joy. I understood in a new way what my own, and every individual's vocation really is.

"Then in the Benedictine Basilica of St. Anselm, as I stood before an altar where Mary is shown holding Jesus on her lap, I understood something else: in a certain sense Mary represents humanity, holding the Church on her lap. Therefore, also my life must be a vessel containing Christ."

During these days, we have listened to Chiara Lubich speaking about the spiritual experience of the will of God, as lived in the Focolare Movement, and we also heard the Reverend Dieter Fürst of the Lutheran Church talk about the will of God. What impressed you most in these talks?

"Sometimes, even we, like so many Christians, have a negative concept of the will of God, as if it were something imposed upon us. But from these talks and conversations I have understood that the will of God is an expression of his love it is not something abstract; it is his personal love for me. And because he loves me, he wants my love to grow. But, at the same time he expects me to turn to him in order to know what I should do to follow him. I see now that doing the will of God is my chance to enter into the 'game of love' that God proposes to each one, answering his call of love with my love."

The fact that perfect unity has not yet been achieved between our two Churches became apparent every time we celebrate our liturgies separately. How do you feel about this?

"Personally, this difficulty is not so great for me, because I can participate in the Lutheran Supper and therefore receive the body and blood of Christ. It is also because of the deep bond of unity among us that I feel this separation much less. In other words, the fact that we are united in God, in Christ, in the Word of God, in the Holy Spirit, is more essential than the fact of partaking in Communion together. We must nevertheless add that this is something we are still missing and which we must reach one day."

The other day we had a meeting with Msgr. Aloys Klein of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, who gave us a general view of the bilateral and multilateral theological dialogue taking place among the Churches. What struck you most in his talk?

"As never before, I could see the enormous work that has been accomplished during the last twenty to thirty years, in establishing ecumenical contacts with Protestants, Orthodox and Anglicans. I was really impressed by this. I also saw that the difficulties are many and various and still represent an obstacle to unity. But for this very reason I feel, as Msgr. Klein said, that we must take much more recourse to the power of prayer. It is fundamental that people who work in ecumenism put all their trust in the Holy Spirit and be totally open to his inspiration. They must do their utmost to reinforce the basis of these ecumenical dialogues, by living mutual love more intensely in their own communities and Churches."

Deacon Gunther Rattey of the Lutheran Church, who has been living in the small ecumenical city of Ottmaring in Germany, for ten years, said: "It is fundamental that people who work in ecumenism put all their trust in the Holy Spirit and be totally open to his inspiration. They must do their utmost to reinforce the basis of these ecumenical dialogues, by living mutual love more intensely in their own communities and Churches."

During these days there was a great deal of talk about "spiritual ecumenism." Is this, in your opinion, a constructive way to achieve complete unity?

"I feel that here we are dealing with something that all Christians can live. Ecumenism itself is already a reality, expressed through prayer and a personal conversion to God. It is of course God who must act — he is the one who can touch hearts and bring about a change. But we can give our contribution, provided we have the trust and the readiness to follow him in everything he wants us to do. This is something every Christian can do, even today, and it is essential if we want to do our part in the official work of ecumenism."

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1) Focolarini: see inside back cover.

Images FOR words

"He who gives God his will,
gives himself,
gives everything he is."

ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

OUR BODY, TOO,
IS INVOLVED IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.
THE CHURCH HAS,
FROM ITS BEGINNINGS, GIVEN
GREAT EMPHASIS TO THIS ASPECT OF PRAYER.

ASPECTS OF PRAYER

by FATHER PASCAL FORESI

Prayer has been defined as the human being's "dialogue" of love with God; and the word dialogue implies that it is not only we who pray, but that in some mysterious, silent way, Jesus also answers us. A dialogue of love, furthermore, does not involve only our intelligence, but our will and feelings as well. In prayer life there are periods of so-called "aridity" during which no joy whatever is felt in prayer, and there are also periods of great interior delight. In the periods of aridity we pray without feeling anything, but our intelligence and our will are sufficient. This is what really counts.

Prayer may be expressed in many different ways: there is vocal prayer (the rosary, for instance), mental prayer (like meditation), and contemplative prayer. This last kind of prayer involves an intuition of God which comes about when we reach a certain stage in our spiritual life. This intuition may be luminous or obscure, in the sense that God either fills us with his light, or makes us feel his mysterious presence in darkness, and this presence transforms us.

Here, however, I would like to deal with a form of prayer which was widely practiced in the early Church — prayer with the body. I think this could be useful for everyone, since it is the entire human being who must give glory to God. But above all it may help those who are still at the early stages of their prayer life, and those who may have difficulty with vocal or mental prayer. (I shall not be able, in this brief article, to go into a comprehensive treatment of this vast subject; I will not consider, for instance, such themes as praying through breathing or with our heartbeat; or the influence of bodily prayer on the Orthodox Church, and so on.)

At Mass, for instance, the Church invites us to kneel, or stand, or sit . . . as though "compelling " us to follow the liturgy. This form of bodily prayer already existed in the early Church. Let us see then what kinds of prayer with the body we find in the New Testament, and in particular in the life of Jesus.

In St. Matthew, Chapter 14, verse 19 we read: "He gave orders that the people were to sit down on the grass: then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and gave thanks to God." "Raised his eyes to heaven . . . " Particularly before the Second Vatican Council, it was prescribed that, in certain moments during the celebration of Mass, the priest should raise his eyes to heaven. This action is an acknowledgment of God's greatness, like a physical ejaculation. Obviously, God does not inhabit the heavens only: he is everywhere. Yet, with this gesture, we symbolically declare that he is beyond us, that he is "in the heavens above." Jesus used this bodily prayer himself, and we can use it as well, to pray simply during the day, perhaps while at work where we may not be able to say an ejaculation, but can still raise our eyes to heaven.

We can also learn from the New Testament that Jesus often prayed either standing or walking. When recounting how he received his baptism from John, the Gospel account does not tell us whether he was standing, but it is generally assumed that he was. "Now when all the people had been baptized and while Jesus after his own baptism was at prayer, the heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily shape, like a dove" (Lk. 3:21-25).

William Kaufman

We find this way of praying, either standing still or walking from the earliest times in the life of the Church. We need only recall the great pilgrimages to the sanctuaries in the Holy Land, to St. James of Compostela in Spain, to St. Peter's in Rome during the Holy Years. Processions as a way of praying are in the process of disappearing, but since prayer must involve the entire body, this practice should be restored.

In connection with our Movement, the Focolare, this kind of bodily prayer makes me think for instance of the many people who flock to the various Mariapoli[1] and to the conventions and courses given at the Mariapolis Centers scattered all over the world. At times they travel hundreds of miles, standing, or sitting or in other positions and they make me think of the pilgrims of the Middle Ages. They come in order to find a spirituality, and they come with an attitude of love.

The Church also instructs us to pray while sitting down. In Chapter 4, verses 17 to 21, St. Luke tells us that in the synagogue: "Unrolling the scroll (Jesus) found the place where it is written: 'The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor.' He then rolled up the scroll and sat down." Since he was in the synagogue, he apparently sat down to pray. Thus, even being seated is a form of prayer acceptable to God, provided it is in harmony with a certain inner attitude, and conducive to a more intense concentration.

What matters is not to be more or less uncomfortable, but to pray well. This was the belief of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, and it was shared by St. Ignatius Loyola who said that those who can pray well either lying down or on their knees, may remain in that position, as long as — and this is my comment — they reach true union with God. Both of these are also forms of bodily prayer.

In the Gospel of St. Matthew where he speaks of Jesus in Gethsemane, we read: "And going on a little further he fell on his face and prayed" (Mt. 26:39). The practice

of lying prostrate in prayer is still conserved by the Church during the Masses for the consecration of bishops and the ordination of priests and deacons.

Every priest remembers that solemn moment when, lying face down before the altar, he heard the chants and prayers of the faithful. But it is not only on these rare occasions that we can pray lying prone before God. For many, praying in this position helps them to feel as though the universe is enveloping them, and they are able to abandon their cares to God.

St. Luke, speaking also of Gethsemane, tells us that Jesus ". . . withdrew from them, about a stone's throw away, and knelt down and prayed" (Lk. 22:41).

This is one of the forms of prayer with the body that is best known in the Western Church. We find it at Mass, during visits to the Most Holy Sacrament, during adoration, and in many other circumstances.

We may ask ourselves: is it good to pray as much as possible on our knees? The answer is: It is good to pray. And if the penitential position of kneeling makes it more difficult to pray, then it is better to change position. As we see, at this point, there are many ways of praying with our body. Any one of them can be appropriate as long as it helps us to be recollected and composed.

Another important aspect of prayer is withdrawing into seclusion, as illustrated by St. Luke (5:16): "But he would always go off to some place where he could be alone and pray." And again by St. Matthew (6:6): "But when you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place." Nevertheless, prayer does not necessarily always require physical solitude, but spiritual silence is essential. In other words, we must not let ourselves get taken and be distracted by the "noise" of the world, like TV, radio, movies, or an excessive absorption in the affairs of the world.

We are all familiar with the famous episode in the New Testament where the repentant sinner came to the house of a pharisee where Jesus was having dinner. Falling down before Jesus' feet, she bathed them with her tears, dried them with her hair, and anointed them with the precious oil she had brought in a jar.

What I want to underline in this story is that the woman was a sinner and that she kissed Jesus' feet. The fact that she is called a sinner and not simply a person who sometimes commits a sin, means that she was so used to a sinful way of life that every fiber of her being was drawn to immoderate pleasure. This is the reason for her nearly "physical" need to purify herself by weeping, drying Jesus' feet with her own hair, and kissing them with a new, pure love — a love purified by her contact with Jesus.

Thus the kiss, an everyday gesture of affection, entered into Church usage: the kiss of peace during Mass, kissing the Cross on Good Friday, kissing relics. As a form of bodily prayer we can give a kiss to Jesus in any moment during the day, or at the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament — and it does not matter whether we move our lips or not. But it must be given with great love and interior joy, like St. Therese of Lisieux, who almost scandalized the other Carmelite Sisters of her convent when, instead of kissing the feet of the Crucified, she kissed Jesus on the face.

Another form of bodily prayer is weeping, as we read in the passage about Peter's denial of Christ in Luke (22:60): ". . . and Peter remembered what the Lord had said to him, 'Before the cock crows today, you will have disowned me three times.' Peter went out and wept bitterly."

Weeping, in this case, is obviously a prayer of sorrow for having done something we should not have done. And I think that all of us, at one time or another, have shed tears for this reason. But there are other kinds of tears as well, like those that St. Ignatius Loyola, according to his diary, used to shed several times a day while praying.

In the Middle Ages we find writings about various kinds of tears which were the fruit of a gift from God. St. Catherine of Siena tells us of a way of crying that can console even those of us who are not inclined to weeping — namely "a weeping of fire." "Then God, gentle first Truth, spoke: 'I still have to tell you, if I would fully answer your desire, about some souls who want the perfection of tears though it seems they cannot have it. Is there another way than physical tears? Yes. There is a weeping of fire, of true, holy longing and it consumes in love. Such a soul would like to dissolve her very life in weeping in self-contempt and for the salvation of souls, but she seems unable to do it.' "[2] In other words, even if one is unable to cry outwardly, there can be a gift from God of these "tears of fire" within.

Finally there is a form of bodily prayer that is extreme — the one of Jesus on the Cross. Here the Savior is forced to stay immobilized with outstretched arms, a position which reminds us of the manner of praying which priests and faithful have adopted during Mass. There are two passages referring to this that, according to me, are fundamental — one is St. Luke's (23:34): "Father forgive them; they do not know what they are doing." As he approaches death, Jesus redeems us in the position of the Crucified One. The redemption is expressed even more totally when he cries out: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt. 15:34). At that moment he took upon himself our sins and thus accomplished the redemption of humanity. This is a mystery which we shall never fully understand, a mystery that is represented by the position of martyrdom that Jesus assumes on the cross.

Today crucifixion no longer exists and physical martyrdom is becoming rarer. But a form of physical, spiritual, and moral martyrdom remains due to sickness, alienation, injustice — and this kind can be experienced by everyone. We must give it the same meaning that Jesus did in his abandonment.

When we suffer we are in the best situation to pray. There we complete the redemption of mankind; there we achieve the deepest unity with God. ●

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1) Mariapolis: Summer gatherings of the Focolare Movement.

2) "The Dialogue," Ch: 88, 91.

I want to go home

by Diana Williamson

I am a medical student in a big city. Recently I was working nights as a medical assistant. One evening I was working on a medical floor where there were many terminally ill patients in immediate danger of death. As I was standing waiting for my assignment, I could hear that one of the patients was very frightened and kept screaming. The nurse was trying to decide who to assign to this patient and she looked at me. Since she knew me a little bit, she asked me if I would mind taking him. The problem was that since he was in isolation all staff and visitors had to put on a mask, gown, and gloves. It was very hot in his room, making the whole situation very uncomfortable, so nobody really wanted to take him. I immediately said yes. On my way into the room the nurse said to me: "But you have to realize that he doesn't know what he's talking about, he's delirious, so just ignore him." I thought it could be a really easy night — I could just sit in there and read a book, or go to sleep; but I realized that there was a special presence of Jesus in this man who was suffering. At the beginning he just kept screaming and saying things that didn't make sense, so I decided to try and connect his thoughts as much as possible and make him aware that there was someone in the room with him, by trying to respond whenever I could. At a certain point I had the impression that his mind had become a little bit clearer. He began to tell me about his life: that a few years earlier there had been a serious car accident in which his wife had been killed and his son had been badly mutilated. Then his mother had died and just when he thought he was getting his life together he became sick with leukemia. Now he had been in the hospital for three months, and because he had to be in isolation due to various infections, he had also been diagnosed as having isolation psychosis. For this reason everyone ignored whatever he said. At this point I really had the impression that his telling me this was a response to my love. At one point he asked me if I believed in God. I answered that I did, and that I believed that God is love. He didn't respond; he just kept drifting. Later on in the evening he said to me: "You know your're young: you have your whole life ahead of you. Will you pray for me? I have to go home, I really want to go home, just one more time, and the only way I can do that is if the bone marrow test is negative." He just kept repeating to pray for him. I left in the morning and I felt the weight of his suffering but I did not know what to do for him. As I was going by a Church I decided to stop in and ask Jesus to help him, but also to help me. Then I had the idea that I could bring his prayer to Jesus. What he had said was actually a prayer, only he didn't know how to ask it directly.

That had been my last day of work before going on a week's trip. As soon as I got back I stopped in to see how this man was doing. Everyone was surprised to see me on my day off and they asked me what I was doing there. I said: "Oh I'm coming to see the man who had been in isolation." The nurse said to me: "Oh, don't you know? He's not in isolation anymore. The doctors don't really understand it, but the bone marrow exam came out good; they don't know for how long, but it seems that he'll be able to go home for a while." I went into his room not knowing whether he would remember me or not. He looked at me, hesitated for a moment, and then said: "You're the girl with the miracle prayer. Thank you."

I realized, just as I had that night when he was delirious, that his health was in God's hands. We didn't know what the future would hold, but something had happened to him. I really felt that the love of God had entered into his life.

by PIERO PASOLINI

A BETTER TOMORROW

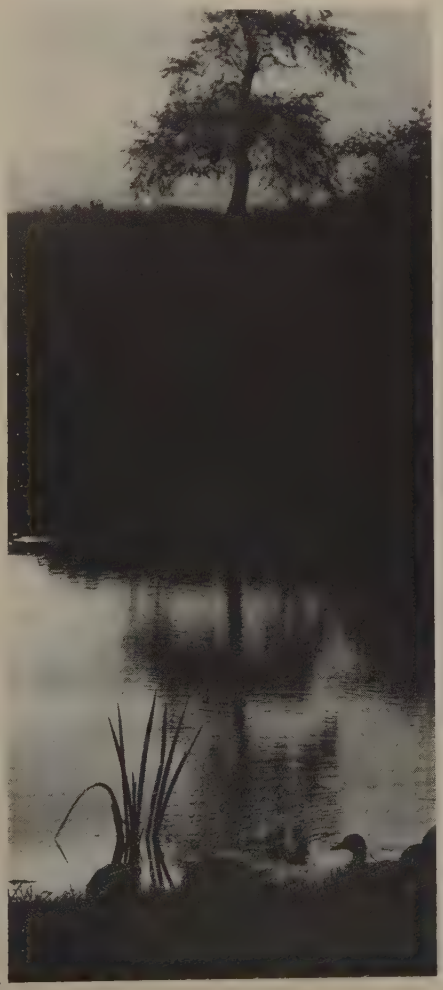
According to many sociologists the concepts of cybernetics can be used to study the social structures of mankind. In the various situations of life, each person needs to relate with others at different levels, ranging from the relationships within the family and those at work, in the local community and on a national level, to one's relationship with humanity as a whole. In each of all these situations, the individual contributes towards building a sense of community to the extent that he or she observes the rules and is ready to give of him or herself in cooperation with others, in order to bring about the community.

What is the real and essential meaning of human sociality? What are the laws and the cybernetic conditions through which the whole acquires a full sense of humanity?

Here we can link what is being said with an article published in *Living City*, July, 1981 "The Evolution of Human Beings is to become Christ." In the Christian view of the world, the human being in his or her corner of the universe, is given a universal significance. Humanity was never destined to live in a jungle, like groups of intelligent animals, associating only for their own development, and in conflict with the development of others. Nor, to be optimistic, can humanity be regarded as a vast herd of intelligent animals, able to organize itself so as to be united in a common prosperity based on wise laws of behavior and exchange. If humanity were seen in such an extremely materialistic way, towards what end could it possibly be evolving? What sense would the future have?

The process of evolution which has preceded us teaches that whatever does not evolve in new directions either stagnates by continuing to exist in a blind alley, or else it dies out. Of all the beings on earth, it seems that only the human line has carried evolution forward, acquiring new direction with the appearance of new transcendent factors like the conscience and freedom. On the human level, evolution is no longer an automatic process directed by the cybernetics of coarse laws. People evolve, individually as well as socially, to the extent that they are aware of what they must become. Then they choose the right cybernetic relationships in order to achieve it. Cybernetics always remains the same, following its own rules; but at the conscious level the condition of "not being" so as to be able, simultaneously to "be" and to "become" together "something else," is revealed in its supremely transcendent aspect — that of a conscious gift, a relationship based on the laws of a reality which, at our level, is called "love."

The process of evolution which has preceded us teaches that whatever does not evolve in new directions either stagnates by continuing to exist in a blind alley, or else it dies out.



In the Christian and, I believe, realistic view of things, there does not appear to be any way to evolve in the ultimate sense of the word, other than to become human beings evolving towards Christ. Going from analogy to analogy, an inescapable law of cybernetics directed the evolutionary events which preceded us and led to our existence. Now, the analogy seems to be finished. The evolutionary step is final and absolute, as Christianity shows. The Christ event is already in some way contained in the primordial information of the absolute and of God. By this, a person is conscious — he or she thinks and is able to accept the idea of the absolute and of God. Since this event, the man-Christ has established himself as the ultimate outcome of earthly evolution, In order to become truly human, humanity can only evolve in this way.

Seen in history, such a process seems slow and difficult. Even if we confine ourselves to the 2000 years since the historical revelation of Christ, very little of this idea seems to have entered humanity. Certainly there have been great Christian movements which have tried to incarnate this idea socially. The essential commandment of Christ to "love one another as I have loved you" (the key law of human cybernetics) has been propounded and incalculated continually, both by the Church in general and by strong groups belonging to the Church.

But if 2000 years later, we look at the usual relationships existing among individuals, families, social groups, firms, regions and nations, it is obvious that there is very little Christian cybernetics. More frequently, a negative cybernetic organization is found, based on laws of conflict, competition and profit — in short, on egoism.

The awareness that humanity can only be human if it fulfills itself in Christ, seems generally absent. Indeed, many "good" people work with great love and sacrifice

The laws governing every organized reality

Years ago people talked a lot about cybernetics as "the science of the century." Today it is spoken about much less. Is this because it has lost its value? Certainly not. Perhaps cybernetics has entered so deeply into every aspect of our practical life that we no longer notice it. We have only to think of the growing boom in the most elementary and banal forms of cybernetic devices, from the big computers that control factories, banks, scientific laboratories, and space probes, to the microcircuits in every TV set, camera and educational equipment.

Cybernetics is a science that is difficult to define. In fact, it is not really a science in the widely accepted sense of the word. One could call it the science which sets out to penetrate and explain the logical meaning of the relationships inherent in the organization of certain structures: the "autodynamic" structures — those relationships which, in the exchange of energy and materials, both internally and externally are able to carry out their own functions autonomously. They can be artificial, as in the case of computers and all automatic man-made devices, although these are really only cybernetic if one considers the human mind which designs and uses them as being part of the complete system. Alternatively, they can be formed naturally in a spontaneous and autonomous way, as in the case of living things.

In this last case, the autonomous method of self-structure, besides giving a precise meaning to a structured reality (the living thing which organizes itself), embraces the concept of evolution, of progress, and, therefore, of history. These living things represent the typical case of cybernetic reality, whether seen as the self-organization and development of an individual or as the inception and development of an evolutionary process which, throughout the history of the earth, brings various organisms to maturity.

This evolutionary development of reality occurs according to precise rules or laws which are linked both to the nature of the elements which are combined, and, more significantly, to the type of organization which these laws give to the resulting structure. Because it is cybernetic, such a structure generates a completely new way of "being," possessing a new and altogether different direction from that of its constituent elements. For example, an animal taken as a whole has certain characteristics which are quite different from, and on a higher level than, the characteristics of the organs, cells, molecules and atoms which make up its structure.

Cyberneticists express this fact in the prase: "In cybernetics, the whole is not the sum of the parts." What it really means is that the whole is something different — a new being. I have spoken about this several times before, so I will not dwell on details here. In a recent article, I described from a particular viewpoint what could be considered as the evolutionary line of human reality.

In it I concentrated on the evolutionary process, especially from the social perspective, according to the Christian view of the world. In fact, I focused upon the final and absolute transcendence for human beings: Christ. Could this view be regarded as cybernetic? I think it could, because cybernetics can be defined as the science which is concerned with the laws which cause various "elements" to

(continued from page 17)

to help humanity develop in a different direction. Many people dedicate their lives to organizing a type of social structure which achieves a form of justice which, in the light of Christ's commandment, has a false ring. I would say that many people dream about bringing to the whole of humanity a certain form of ideal situation where prosperity is distributed as equally and widely as possible. They do not seem to realize that, in fact, they are working toward a more and more perfect organization of everyone's selfishness. People are not made to organize themselves in this way. It is an impossible ideal. For Christ, prosperity is positive only if it is a consequence of love.

In fact, this is not true cybernetics and, therefore, does not function socially but, rather works backwards. In general, things get worse. In this century alone, there have been two world wars followed by a geometric escalation of death and destruction. Hundreds of millions of people have died through warfare, ideological persecutions, and struggles for political and economic power. There has been a continuous state of either open or guerilla war in every corner of the world, often instigated and armed by the "big powers" but played out by the little powers.

And now? We are sliding toward total degeneration, toward a total loss of "awareness." It is difficult to evaluate the enormous degree of paranoid stupidity with which humanity as a whole is afflicted, especially in the Northern Hemisphere with the nuclear arms race. Already by 1950, the existing 200,000 megatons of nuclear arms was more than enough to destroy everyone and everything on earth in the space of a few hours.

In spite of this, the last 20 years have been spent in perfecting and increasing nuclear arms — consuming a great part of the revenue from the world's work, ruining economics and keeping two-thirds

organize themselves in a certain way.

Two aspects can be recognized in any organization of cybernetic structures, whether they be natural or artificial. First of all, the "meaning" and the nature of the resultant reality; and secondly, the laws which regulate the organized interaction among the elements which have come together to determine that "meaning." This cybernetic process can be seen, as I said in the article, endlessly repeated in every act of self-organization and in every evolutionary step.

Cybernetic law is always the same, irrespective of the level of transcendence to which it is applied. From the primordial construction of elementary particles, right up to human beings and their process of socialization, the mechanism seems always to be the same, as if it were a principle inherent in the nature of things.

On the one hand, the constituent elements lose their identity, assuming instead that of their relationship with the others, while at the same time preserving their identity and remaining as themselves precisely in order to give meaning to that collective relationship and build up the resulting structure. For example, hydrogen and oxygen lose their own characteristics when they combine to produce water (which is a distinctly new entity), yet they remain themselves more than ever because it is their beings united which give rise to water. Perhaps, this seems like a play on words but really it is a "cybernetic game" in which the more something "is not," the more it "is" — existing in the relationship which generates the final structure. That is why elements are not summed but, instead, together become a new entity. This is the reason for the phrase already quoted — "The whole is not the sum of the parts."

P. P.

An animal taken as a whole has certain characteristics which are quite different from, and on a higher level than, the characteristics of the organs, cells, molecules and atoms which make up its structure.

of the world in a state of underdevelopment and hunger. Today, there are millions of megatons divided between the two opposing blocks and frenzied efforts continue to increase and "improve" their power. The stupidity of this is seen in the fact that they are almost totally useless. To carry out a "total" war, (i.e. total destruction) one percent of them would be enough. The fact that this is not understood makes one fear that the degree of stupidity is so great as to make the use of nuclear arms possible. All of this is reinforced by the uncontrollable chaos of power struggles, by tyranny and by egoism at every level.

At this point, what can one think? What kind of evolution is humanity following? Or is it, rather, large-scale "involution?" Is evolution, having reached its end, now failing? Something must have gone wrong in what ought to have been evolution according to Christ. Perhaps the fundamental principle of Christian cybernetics has not yet succeeded in penetrating the consciousness of the collectivity.

Jesus, revealing to us the laws of our evolution in order to become "him", ". . . does not promise wealth, or easy conditions of life, or even daily bread, although he lays upon us the duty of working for them, in solidarity, with courage and a sense of justice; without neglecting, moreover, to ask God for them at the same time and to thank him who is the Author of all good,"[1] as Pope John Paul II said in Brazzaville during his African tour. It is through: "Love one another as I have loved you," that we achieve peace, development and prosperity. Jesus went even further, defining this love as love for our enemies. "It was said, 'love your neighbor and hate your enemies', but I say to you, 'love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you. . . '". This is the love of Christ which led

him to give his life for his enemies. This is the meaning of the message that the Pope dared to give, partly in an explicit way and partly implied, at Brazzaville to a crowd of 700,000 people; people whom he knew were divided by deadly hatred.

Nonetheless, there are laws of human cybernetics which strive to bring about the Christ-humanity. There is no other way. This is the way Christ loved and the law is, that in order to be him, we must love in the same way. Humanity today, on the brink of total failure, must grasp this paradoxical message.

At least on the social level, there has never been any desire to grasp it. For this reason the landslide seems to be imminent. It may appear to be a nonsensical approach for the current way of thinking. Pope John Paul II did not hesitate to suggest the solution — to "turn the other cheek" — to the people of Brazzaville and, indeed, to the world. This is the ultimate answer which can save the true development and progress of humanity in peace.

Yet, in spite of all appearances, there may be solid foundations for hope. This "type" of love is seeping, as if by capillary action, into the cells of humanity as a practical ideal. Perhaps, when the frenzy of collective humanity has run its course, this unrest will take over and the world will begin to understand that it must change course. In the depths of every person of good will, there is the faith that the final act of evolution on earth cannot fail.

Christ has definitely promised to be with us right to the end. He is, to use Teilhard de Chardin's phrase, the "motor of evolution." No matter what disaster occurs, this can give us an absolute hope. Teilhard de Chardin was perhaps the first person to understand the "Christian direction" of universal evolution and I have always been very impressed by his words. ". . . I am sure of it, since, in the end, the best always ends up happening and the future is better than any past." ●

1) Taken from the Pope's talk given in Brazzaville — L'Oservatore Romano, English Edition — May 26, 1980.

GEN ORANGE

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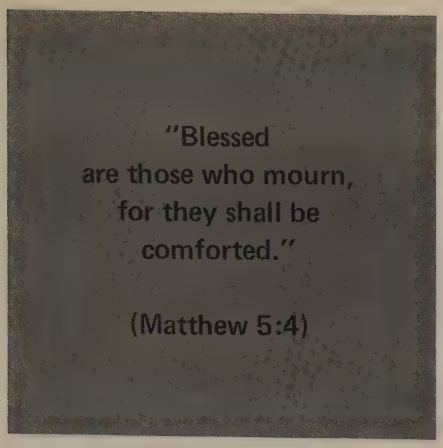
WORD OF LIFE



"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Mt.5:4).

This sentence, as you probably recall, is from the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus revolutionized our human way of thinking by calling "blessed" and "happy" those who, at first glance, could seem anything but happy: the poor, the persecuted, the meek, those who spend their lives bringing peace to others. . . .

With this particular statement, he even seems to be affirming the absurd; declaring "happy" those who are in tears, "blessed" those who are afflicted with suffering. How can such an affirmation be justified?

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Jesus, the Messiah, came to fulfill the words of Isaiah who had prophesied that a time would come when all who suffer would be consoled and all who mourn would be comforted (Is. 61:1-3).

Jesus knows that those who suffer are really fortunate and blessed because they are more disposed to welcome his words and, therefore, to enter his kingdom. He knows that through him the world's many afflictions can be transformed into a life of joy.

In speaking of those who "mourn," Jesus intends not a particular category of people, but all who suffer — regardless of age, sex, race, or nationality — for whatever reason: a misfortune, a natural disaster, an illness, the death of a loved one, or the loss of possessions or reputation. He is also referring to the pain of those who are disillusioned, and of those whose unspoken suffering is deep within their hearts. He is speaking of these, and of us too, if we are suffering at this moment.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

"They shall be comforted." By using the future tense, Jesus is certainly referring to the times to come when God himself will reward all those who have borne their suffering well, and "he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more" (Rev. 21:4). Knowing that all this will come about when Christ's kingdom is established, fills our hearts with hope, and hope mitigates suffering.

However, Jesus is not merely trying to lead those who are unhappy to resign themselves to their condition with the promise of a future reward. He is thinking of the present as well.

His kingdom, in fact, is already here, even though it is not yet in its final form. It is present in Jesus himself, who, after undergoing a death accompanied by great suffering and sorrow, arose and thus conquered death.

As Christians we also have the the kingdom present in our hearts, because God lives within us. The Trinity itself dwells in our hearts. And so the blessed happiness Jesus proclaims can already be ours.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

In the kingdom brought by Jesus we can experience this consolation every day. Of course, there is a prerequisite: that we live as citizens of this kingdom, conforming our lives to its laws and to what Jesus asks of us.

The word makes us live.

The word makes us free.

The word gives us joy.

The word makes us one.

He has said that we must accept the sufferings that come upon us, in the same way that he accepted his own.

He wants us to "take up" our cross; he does not want us to hate it, to reject it, to push it away, or to simply drag it along. We must love it! Jesus wants us to set it squarely on our shoulders. And even more — he wants us to brandish it like a torch, like a banner.

Then we will experience the miracle of the kingdom; God will make our cross seem lighter, and we will be able to carry it. We will even be able to smile amidst the tears. We will have a strength that is not ours, a strength that comes from him. And we will understand why he says, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mt. 11: 30).

Religion is not the opiate of the people, meant to put them to sleep so that they will not react against suffering. No, the sufferings may remain, but we will experience a new vigor that will help us to bear the trials of life and that will enable us to help others who are suffering to overcome their pain and to view their suffering as Jesus viewed and accepted his: as a means of redemption.

CHIARA LUBICH

EXPERIENCES

The following are experiences that some of our readers shared with us in living the Gospel.

We were living the word of life, "He who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." It was the first morning of a change in my office duties and a few people had already made some remarks because one of my jobs was to decollate copies of computer output and throw away the carbons. My boss had asked me if I would mind taking on the task because of a few difficulties and low office morale. I thought it would be a good opportunity to restore peace and harmony so I said yes.

When the day finally came to actually do the job it was terrible . . . my back hurt . . . it was very tiring . . . and there was a lot of pressure to get the job done by the deadline. There really was enough work for two people. In the process of doing the job I began to have doubts and various ideas popped into my head . . . did I go to college to do this? . . . Let them hire a Kelly girl . . . maybe the others are right — this is a menial task. It didn't take very long for the word of life "He who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted" to come to mind. Instantly I changed my attitude and tried to put myself in the place that the words of Jesus had called for. I really felt a great peace and, after a while, I could see that all the others noticed.

When it was time for lunch, my boss stopped by the lunchroom. I spoke to him about some possible ideas which could be used for the afternoon's new task which would be to input a great amount of data in a short period of time. He accepted and told everyone to cooperate. I tried to keep the word of life in mind as I went to start inputting the mountain of data that everyone had dropped in front of me. It was my job and so in this I could live the word of life.

After about an hour, the computer went down. The computer center said it would take a little time. People started to come to me one at a time. "I'll take some of that data and help you input," each one said. Before I knew it the pile was one I could handle. By the time the computer was working there was such a harmony among us that we didn't even notice that half of the afternoon had gone by and we would all have to rush to get finished. The office seemed like a different place and when I got there the next day, you could feel that what little I had tried to live of the word of life had had its effects.

J. G.

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For some time I had been telling Jesus that I wanted to follow him by leaving everything. I had understood that he was calling me to enter the Focolare as a focolarina,[1] and I had learned to tell him that I wanted to do everything for him, to do his will every moment. A month after having left my home to enter the School of Formation in New York, I was walking one morning toward the library university after a class. A thought struck me — that day was my brother's birthday. I felt within me a desire to call home to wish him, "Happy Birthday." I realized right away that this didn't make sense. He probably wasn't at home anyway because he studied at a university far from my hometown. But this urge to call home was still there. As I entered the library, I passed some telephones. I stopped immediately and called.

My sister answered the phone. She quickly said "Hello," confirmed that my brother wasn't home and then passed the phone to my mother. My mother was in a hurry also but stopped just for a few minutes to say "Hello." But she had to go and then gave the telephone to my father. I had just begun to wonder if this had been a good idea after all, when my father came to the phone and began to tell me that he had read *Living City* and had really liked everything about it. We continued talking for quite a few minutes. It was a simple, yet really beautiful conversation, the most beautiful and deepest conversation I remember ever having with him. After that I felt a great peace inside which remained with me all day.

That evening my sister called to tell me that my father had died of a heart attack. It was really a strong moment for me, and even though I felt a deep suffering, I was really struck by the love of God who had urged me to call that afternoon. This helped me to say "Yes" and embrace this suffering and to love my family.

I went home, and with the support of the unity of many I tried to forget my suffering in order to take on that of the others. I tried to love concretely in the arrangements for the wake and the funeral, in planning for the meals for the

relatives who had come from out of town.

After all the activity had died down I was alone with my Mom, my brothers and sister, all younger than I am. I was worried about how they would get along financially. It seemed to me then that all the strength that I had had in the previous days drained out of me and that I wouldn't have had the courage to leave again. It was November 1, and I happened to pick up that month's word of life which was: "If anyone comes to me without turning his back on his father and mother, his wife and his children, his brothers and sisters indeed his very self, he cannot be my follower" (Lk. 14:26). It reminded me that what counts is to do what God wants and that he, in his love, would take care of everything.

I left knowing that I was called to make not only a spiritual cut with my family but a physical cut as well. It was difficult but I experienced the love of God for me.

A few days later my mother called to tell me that things had started to go well. The family was united and peaceful. After I had left she had gone ahead working in Dad's office and had found that his creditors had begun to pay some long overdue debts. Many other people were offering to help my mother. I thanked God who is never outdone in generosity.

B. R.

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1) Focolarina: see inside back cover.

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One Friday afternoon I had come home from work very tired. I still had much work to do, and looked forward to eating supper early, reading and studying for a while, and then going to bed early. My wife, Maureen, had gone out shopping, and had promised me that she would return in time for us to go to the 5:30 Mass. She had not returned by 5:00, so I put some supper in the oven, dressed Joseph for the walk to church, and went to Mass. Maureen met us there. Afterwards, she told me that she had invited a friend and her two little children over for pizza. I was not to have the dinner I'd made, or the quiet evening after all! My wife was taking the car to go pick up the pizza and the guests! I was angry and stomped home. When I stepped in the door, I realized how disorderly the house was. My first thought was, "If she made the plans, she can take care of everything." Then the word of life came to mind, "Blessed are the peacemakers." I knew that to have peace with myself, I needed to clean the house; then I could have peace with my wife and with our friends who were coming to dinner. Again, the will of God was clear — to love, to do the good that he wanted, not the one that I wanted.

T. M.

□□□

I had an experience trying to live the word of life, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." The minister of an evangelical church here in Omaha who lives next door to us asked me to play on their Sunday afternoon basketball team and so I did. Everyone else is so much shorter on the team that they were very happy to have me play with them. It is a league where there are no referees so each player is responsible to call fouls, and other violations on the other team which gets to be interesting after a while.

We were playing one afternoon and the whole game turned out to be just one argument after another. They would call what seemed to be a very trivial foul and we found ourselves doing the very same thing with an attitude of revenge. We ended up losing the game and on the way home we were discussing how the game had not been very enjoyable because we too had put our focus on getting revenge, and the game had been a waste of time.

I also thought of the word of life and really recognized how far I was from being a "peacemaker." The next Sunday I took a copy of the word of life leaflet along with me and as we were driving over I showed it to my friend and suggested this might be a way to change our approach to this game. We read in the commentary that in order to be peacemakers, we must first possess peace. He said that this sounded like a good idea and that he too wanted to try to live this. We got to the Gym and my friend got out and stuck the word of life in his back pocket. He took it in and showed it to each one of the players and several came up to me before the game and said they too were going to try and live this "idea" this afternoon.

The game started and things were going pretty smoothly. I could see the other players were trying because they were calling very close calls on us and we just tried to go ahead and not be revengeful but to continue to play as best we could. I could especially see this in my friend because he is an extremely competitive person and has a tendency to want to win no matter what.

The game was about half over and there was one of their players and my friend standing out of bounds "discussing" whose ball it should be. The discussion was going on and I was beginning to feel inside a few doubts about the word of life and maybe it just wasn't supposed to work today. The next thing that happened was the coach from their team came running off the bench over to us and immediately said it was our ball and he had seen what had happened. This ended the whole argument and it was the last one of the day.

We ended up losing but after the game some of our players said they really enjoyed playing even though we lost and we were all surprised when some of the other team came over to our bench and apologized for not conducting themselves as they should have. The word of life really did work and the next game after that before we started out several made mention that we have to remember that we have to be the peacemakers.

E. K.

FAMILY LIFE

We all know that if you have a house with a lot of trees around it, in the fall of the year about 90 percent of the leaves find their way into the rain gutters. At least it seems that way, and the leaves plug up the gutters and down spouts. This last winter I did not get the gutters cleaned before it turned cold.

I was glad when midwinter warmed up for a few days, enough to thaw the ice in the rain gutters. This particular Saturday afternoon was a perfect opportunity to catch up and get those gutters cleaned out before the water in them froze again. There was still about two hours of daylight left, so I hurried and prepared to do this task.

I walked through the kitchen where Kim was sitting at the table doing her math story problems. I was all dressed ready to go outdoors. Kim said, "Oh Dad, I'm stuck on a couple of these story problems; can you read them quick and see if you can figure them out. I have worked most of them, but a couple I just don't understand."

My first thought was: "Good grief, surely Kim can see that I am dressed to go work outdoors and she should realize my chores are more important than her math problems." But, I realized that this was an opportunity to give a little of my life for Kim, and do it with joy. So, I read the story problems and gave Kim a couple of clues, and she was able to go on from there. It really only took a moment, and I realized that to love was a decision in that moment, a decision to give up what was important to me for what she needed. She thanked me and I left her smiling.

I went immediately about the task of cleaning out the rain gutters, as darkness was now about an hour away. It was colder outdoors than I thought, and windier. I was working up on the second story part of the house when I heard Kim call: "Dad!" I said, "Yes, Kim, I'm up on the roof." She walked out onto the stone driveway where she could look up and see me and said, "I have one more problem I'm stuck on, can I read it to you?" I looked down to see her standing there with short sleeves, and in her stocking feet. My first impulse was to say "What are you doing out here like that in this cold weather?" My second impulse was to yell at her and say "Can't you see that I'm up here crawling along the edge of the roof working in this cold and wind?" I remembered "By patient endurance you will save your lives" (Lk. 21:19), and again I realized that I should lose myself and help Kim. I had to ask her to read the problem a second time before I could get my own concerns out of the way enough to love her in that moment.

Again, it only took a moment to give her the clue she needed, and she said, "Thanks a lot Dad." Then she added, "Is there anything I can do to help you?" I said, "Yes, if you need to come out again, please put some shoes and a coat on". She said "OK", laughed, and went back in the house.

⊹

Have you ever insulated an attic space with the fiberglass blanket batts that you stuff between the ceiling joist or framework? You know that it is a tedious task to move across the joists in a crawling position being careful not to slip between the joists and stick a leg down through the plasterboard or dry wall ceiling. It is also painful on the knees and ribs, crawling and laying down part of the time to reach the spaces near the roof edge.

One late fall day I was insulating a ceiling over a room adjacent to the garage. It was going very slow because every time I needed more fiberglass batts I had to crawl out of the attic space and down the stepladder to get them. So, I went into the house and asked my daughters if one of them could help me for about an hour. There was this quiet lull for a moment, and finally Kim (our youngest, then about 13), who was watching TV, said, "I will help you". I knew it was not easy for Kim to say yes because she was watching one of her favorite TV shows.

The job was now going quickly because Kim was bringing the insulation material to me as quickly as I could stuff it in place. I remember feeling good about working together, a feeling of unity, because Kim had given up what she was doing to help me.

Then I noticed Kim coming up the stepladder rather slowly. She was carrying insulation under one arm, and our big cat under the other arm. I said, "Kim, I don't think it is a good idea to have the cat up here; he is just going to get in the way." She replied, "Oh no Dad, he will keep me company because I can bring up the insulation faster than you can stuff it in place." So, I said yes to her request. But, as you might expect, Kim began to play with the cat and was no longer being very efficient in keeping me supplied with insulation material. I had to prompt her a few times. Then her playing with the cat got the cat in a very frisky, playful mood. The cat began to run around wildly, jumping into the finished insulated area, moving some of the insulation out of place, and running back and forth across my back and my arms. At this point I was laying on my stomach on the ceiling joists in a tight space. Kim was laughing and telling me to look at the cat, and saying "He is so funny". By that time I had fiberglass fibers up my sleeves, down my neck, and it was itching and irritating me. You can imagine how funny I thought the cat was! I felt my temper start to rise, and my thought was to tell Kim that "I told you that cat should not be up here". In that same moment I realized that Kim had wanted to love me by coming to help me, and I did not want to break that relationship. I immediately converted to love, and at that moment the situation became very funny for me also, and I enjoyed it laughing with Kim.

Kim then said, "Maybe I should take the cat down now," and I agreed that it was a good idea. Kim and I finished the job and we knew we had grown closer that day.

J.K.

Recently we purchased a new car for both business and family use. It represented a large investment for us, and together my husband and I thought that we would limit the use our teen-age son would have of this car.

When our son learned of this, he was very upset. He made it clear that he considered us completely unfair. In the way he was expressing himself, I thought that he was being quite immature. In my mind, I could see him thinking of all the "wrongs" done him in the past, and his anger was steadily growing. Finally, I too responded in anger.

At this point, I found myself becoming irritated with my husband, even though we had agreed on the decision earlier. But now he wasn't home, and I was getting the brunt of our son's reaction, and I began to think that maybe we had been a little too attached to the car when we made that decision.

I had received the word of life the previous day. It was "Blessed are the peacemakers. . ." Upon reading it then, it hadn't occurred to me that I might need to live it within my own family. But then I remembered it, and I realized that I had to live it immediately. First, I had to make peace with myself, for having lost my temper with my son. Next, to make peace in my heart with my husband, and forget my plan for suggesting to him that we (meaning he) might be too attached to the car.

I could see our son also trying to make peace, and that evening, when he wanted to show the car to his friend, we gave him an errand to run using the new car. Even though the weather wasn't too good and the roads were becoming slippery, it seemed important to show our confidence in that way. Actually, we did have confidence in his winter driving skill.

About the time we were expecting him to return, he called to say that all was well, the errand was completed, and he was at his friend's for a few minutes and hadn't wanted us to worry. He said that the roads were pretty slick, but he was driving very slowly. Peace was definitely reestablished.

M.W.

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Special Events

NEW YORK CITY

SATURDAY November 21, 1981	ANNIVERSARY MASS	St. Patrick's Cathedral 5th Ave. at 50th Street MUSIC BY GEN VERDE	3:00 p.m.
	HOSPITALITY BUFFET DINNER	St. Vincent Ferrer Parish Hall Lexington Ave. at 66th Street – US$8.00 –	5:00 p.m.
	COMMEMORATIVE FUNCTION	St. Patrick's Cathedral MUSIC BY GEN VERDE	7:00 p.m.
SUNDAY November 22, 1981	MUSIC FOR UNITY AND PEACE	CONCERT BY GEN VERDE Hunter College, Assembly Hall 695 Park Ave. (entrance on 69th St.) – US$10.00 –	3:00 p.m.

CHICAGO

SUNDAY December 6, 1981	MUSIC FOR UNITY AND PEACE	GEN VERDE MATINEE CONCERT especially for youth Drury Lane Theatre at Water Tower Place – US$6.00 (students) – – US$10.00 (adults) –	2:00 p.m.
	HOSPITALITY BUFFET DINNER	For information contact the Chicago Focolare Centers	
	MUSIC FOR UNITY AND PEACE	GEN VERDE EVENING CONCERT Drury Lane Theatre – US$10.00 –	7:00 p.m.
	RECEPTION	MEET WITH GEN VERDE John Hancock – The 95th – – US$10.00 (limited tickets) –	9:00 p.m.
MONDAY December 7, 1981	OPEN HOUSE	Focolare Center 4822 S. Ellis GEN VERDE WILL BE PRESENT	6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Liturgy at 8:00 p.m.

Seating is limited. Send for tickets for the different events, together with your check or money order (if applicable) for the proper amount, made out to the FOCOLARE MOVEMENT, to: FOCOLARE MOVEMENT – 20th ANNIVERSARY, P.O. Box 496 NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 or FOCOLARE MOVEMENT – 20th ANNIVERSARY, P.O. Box 53426 CHICAGO, IL, 60653.
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The very young and the Gospel

Once, at school, while I was walking down the hall, I saw a 7th grade girl. She was all alone, so I sat down beside her and started to talk to her. She was very surprised because usually a 8th grader doesn't talk to a 7th grader in our school. As I was talking to her, one of my friends came up to me and asked me to go out with her. I really wanted to, but I realized that this girl also needed someone to talk with her, and that she was Jesus to love; so I chose to stay with her instead of going out with my friend. Now, that 7th grade girl and I are real good friends.

Vanessa

I have a shirt that I really like a lot. I wanted to put it on tonight, but my mother said that I couldn't put it on until I did my homework. I wanted to just run downstairs and put it on very quickly, but I did my homework instead to love her.

Then I didn't want to get into my pajamas later on because I didn't want to take off the shirt. I had only been wearing it for a very little time. But I got into my pajamas anyway. I was really trying to love.

Mary Chiara

While I was at a party, a girl asked me if I would play with her. Since she was younger than me, I didn't want to, besides, I was busy eating and doing other things. Then I remembered the New Commandment (Love one another as I have loved you). I knew that I should forget myself and go to love that girl; so I decided to play with her. After that, she and I really had fun.

*

One morning, just as I was waking up, my little brother started telling me something about stars and planes, etc. Since I wasn't really interested and I was still sleepy, I didn't really listen to him. Then I remembered that I wasn't really loving him and that if we were to have mutual love, I should listen to him and really try to understand what he was saying. So I listened to him like I would to Jesus.

Marimel

One day I was at a store and my friend asked me to steal some candy. I said "no" because I wanted to live as God wants us to. Then she said, "Then I won't steal either." That was really the hundredfold for me.

Kathy

The principal of my school asked me to make cards for every single teacher in the school for Teacher Appreciation Day. There was a lot of drawing to do. I wasn't able to finish all of them on time for the day they were due. So, that morning, I found myself alone in a room, trying to finish them and I was nervous, thinking that they might not be ready by that afternoon. Then I remembered that I had to do it for Jesus. So I said, "I am doing this for you, Jesus. Help me to finish them on time." Soon afterward, a boy from my class who draws well came in and offered to help me. By then I was much calmer. We were able to finish them in the last minute. I was very relieved and very happy that I had remained calm and remembered to do it all for Jesus.

Maureen

One day when we were at cheerleading practice two girls were calling a girl all kinds of names. I knew her feelings were hurt so I asked the girls to stop. I also asked them how they would feel if they were in the girl's place. They stopped calling her names and everyone was happy. I was happy too because I had tried to do as Jesus would have done if he were here.

Kristine

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

The Focolare Movement began in 1943, in Italy. Chiara Lubich, with a small group of girls, realized in the midst of the total destruction of World War II, that God is the only one worth living for. Hence they began to place the Gospel in the center of their lives. The testament of Jesus became their Ideal: "That all may be one . . . that the world may know that you have sent me, and that you have loved them as you have loved me . . . " (Jn.17: 23). The life lived by these first girls, the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to a form of spirituality proper to the Focolare Movement. It represents a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

The name "Focolarini" takes its origin from the Italian word "fire" and suggests the idea of "carriers of fire."

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They work as other lay men and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini."

THE VOLUNTEERS

The Volunteers, who are also called the "Volunteers of God," would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. For this reason they remain in their jobs and in their professions in order to vivify them with this spirit.

Their aim is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

THE LARGEST MEMBERSHIP

The largest membership of the Movement is made up of men, women, and young people of all social conditions who are free of any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their free and willing acceptance of its spirit. They keep in touch with the Movement and with one another through large or small gatherings, publications, correspondence, and personal contact.

People with other commitments, even those bound to religious institutions, can form part of the Movement too because the Movement exists wherever its spirit is lived. People of non-Christian religions are also counted among the Movement's friends. Also those who owe no allegiance to any faith are often attracted by one or another of the Movement's aspects.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation.

Thousands of young people all over the world have been attracted by the spirituality of unity. Their number continues to grow.

At the core of this large group of youth, are Gen who have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love. The Gen use all possible means to share with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

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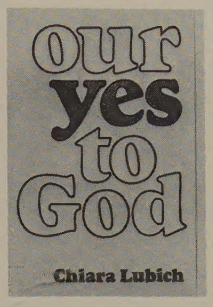

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"A celebration without end" is how Vincent de Paul describes the lives of those who say "yes" to God by doing his will.

In this book Chiara Lubich explores the many facets of doing God's will, which is one of the central points in the life of the Focolare Movement she founded. Her central thesis is: God is love, and there can be no better way of loving him in return than by doing what he asks of us.

First she puts this fundamental intuition to the test of Scripture. She then moves on to the experiences of some of the great saints, and draws upon the teachings of the Church Fathers, the Second Vatican Council, and the recent popes.

This book is stimulating and practical. It shows that doing God's will involves much more than mere passivity or resignation. Moreover, throughout the book, Chiara Lubich points out that doing God's will is the way to true freedom and to our total fulfillment as human beings.

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